RELIGIO LAICI.

Written in a Letter to

JOHN DRYDEN Esq.

Juvenal, Sat. 8.

Quod modo proposui non est
Sententia, verum
Credite me vobis folium
recitare Sibyllæ.

LONDON,

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TO HIS

Much Honoured Friend

JOHN DRYDEN Esq.

SIR,

THE Value I have ever had for your Writings, makes me impatient to peruse all Treatises that are crown'd with your Name; whereof, the last that fell into my Hands, was your *Re-*

ligio Laici; whieh expreſſes as well your great Judgment in, as Value for Religion: a thing too rarely found in this Age among *Gentlemen* of your Parts; and, I am confident, (with the Bleſſing of God upon your Endeavours) not unlikely to prove of great Advantage to the Publick; ſince, as *Mr. Herbert* well obſerves,

A Verſe may find him, who
a Sermon flies,
And turn Delight into a
Sacriſice.

We

We read in Ancient Times, before the Inſtitution of *Moral Philoſophy* by *Socrates*, that *Poets* in general were to the People in ſtead of their *Sacred Writ*, from whom they received their *Divinity*, and Opinion concerning the *Gods*; as, who, and how, to be worſhipped, how pleaſed and pacified, by what *Prayers* and *Ceremonies*, together with ſuch *Rites* and *Ceremonies* as were the *Dionyſiaca*, *Cybeliaca*, *Iſiaca*, *Eleuſiniaca*, and

the like, Inſtituted by *Orpheus*. All which were built upon this Ground, That there could be no true *Poet* but muſt be Divinely inſpired; and if Divinely inſpired, then certainly to be believed. This we find largely diſputed and aſſerted even by *Philoſophers* of beſt Account in thoſe Days. But the two main Arguments induced them to that Belief, were; *Firſt*, That extraordinary Motion of Mind wherewith all good *Poets* in

in all Ages have been poſſeſſed and agitated: And, *ſecondly*, The Teſtimony of *Poets* themſelves, who profeſſing themſelves Inſpired, have made particular Relations of ſtrange Viſions, Raptures, and Apparitions to that purpoſe: So that as the Beginning, Growth, and Confirmation of Idolatry may be aſcribed (as by many it is) to *Poets*, and their Authority; ſo alſo to ſuppoſed *Enthuſiaſms* and *Inſpirations*, upon which that Authority was chiefly

grounded. Hence it is, that many Ancient Authors, as *Ariſtotle*, *Strabo*, and others, affirm, That *Poetry* (in matter of *Writing* and *Compoſition*) was in uſe long before *Proſe*: which might ſeem ſtrange, if not incredible, did we judge by the Diſpoſition of later Times; but of thoſe *Enthuſiaſtick Times*, not leſs probable, than certain, as our Learned *Caſaubon* well obſerves. And this I thought fitting to premiſe, in Anſwer to that

that Obection which your Modeſty is ſo apprehenſive of, *viz.* That being a *Laick*, you interpoſe in Sacred Matters.

Rapin (in his *Reflexions*) ſpeaking of the neceſſary Qualities belonging to a *Poet*, tells us, *He muſt have a* Genius *extaordinary, great Natural Gifts, a Wit juſt, fruitful, piercing, ſolid, and univerſal; an Underſtanding clean and diſtinct; an Imagination neat and pleaſant; an Elevation*

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of Soul, that depends not only on Art or Study, but is purely a Gift of Heaven, which muſt be ſuſtained by a lively Senſe and Vivacity; Judgment, to conſider wiſely of Things; and Vivacity, for the beautiful Expreſſion of them, &c. Now this *Character* is ſo juſtly *yours*, as I cannot but think that he deſcribed what a great *Poet* ſhould be, by hearing what *you* were; and the rather, ſince I have been informed by ſome *Engliſh* of his Acquaintance, That

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Monſieur Rapin was ſtudious in our Language, only for your ſake: Nor would his Pains be loſt.

'Tis a Queſtion not eaſily to be decided, Whether you have been more ſerviceable to the Peace of the *State* in your *Abſolom and Achitophel*, or to the *Church* in your *Religio Laici*, or to the *Nobility* and *Gentry* in the innocent Recreation of your *Plays*? A Country-Retirement, like that of *Ovid*'s, to one

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that has led the Spring of his Age, and Vigour of his Youth, among the Noiſe and Pleaſures of the Town, is certainly a Tranſformation no leſs diſagreeable, than that which the *Poets* feign of *Acteon*, or *Sacred Writ* of the *Aſſyrian Monarch*, who grazed with the *Beaſts* of the Field; and to abandon a *Covent-Garden* Society for the Inſipid Dull Converſe of a Country Village, (where the Nomination of New Healths is the heighth

heighth of their Invention) would render a *Rural Life* to be no leſs than a *Civil Death*, were it not for *Mr. Dryden*'s Writings, which keep us ſtill alive, and, by a moſt Natural Repreſentation of the Humours of the Town, make us flatter and fanſie our ſelves (like the Enjoyment of a Lover's Dream) to be ſtill there.

But I ſhall wave theſe Acknowledgments to you, as things too general to be

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be engroſſed by me alone: And will now ſpend the Remainder of this *Epiſtle* in informing you of the Occaſion of my troubling you with this ſmall *Piece*, which I Entitle by the Name of *Religio Laici*, from a Treatiſe of the *Lord Herbert* of *Cherburie*'s ſo called; whoſe *Notions* I have often made uſe of, and grounded the Chief of my Diſcourſe upon his *Five Catholick* or *Univerſal Principles*: Wherein my only Aim is, to aſſert

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an *Universal Doctrine*, such as no ways oppoſeth the Religion Eſtabliſhed among us, and which may tend both to the Propagation of Vertue, and Extirpation of Vice, as well as to the Reconciliation of thoſe *Diſſenters* now in *England*, who have of late ſo diſturbed the Quiet of this Realm, and who, under the Pretence of Religion, would exclude all *Governours* but *themſelves*. For, as a late

Author

Author well obſerves, *Every Opinion makes a Sect; every Sect, a Faction; and every Faction (when it is able) a War: and every ſuch War is the Cauſe of God; and the Cauſe of God can never be proſecuted with too much Violence: So that all Sobriety is Lukewarmneſs; and to be Obedient to Government, Carnal Compliance.* Which are the Opinions of thoſe that would rob *Cæſar* of his Due, as well as remove

move the Peoples *ancient Land-marks.*

But for my part, as in *Civil Politicks*, I would not, in this ſo *Ancient* and ſo *Lineal* a *Monarchy*, abandon the Beams of ſo fair a *Sun*, for the dreadful Expectation of a divided Company of *Stars*; ſo neither, in *Eccleſiaſticks*, do I covet to be without the *Pale* of the *Church*: ſince, though I will not *Dogmatically* affirm, (as

ſome

ſome do) That *Epiſcopacy* is *Jure Divino*; yet (with the *Lord Bacon*) I ſay, and think *ex Animo*, That it is the neareſt to *Apoſtolical Truth*, and the moſt coherent with *Monarchy*: Wherein, I know, you will not differ from me.

And therefore, *Sir*, at this time, when the *Name* of *Chriſt* is made uſe of to palliate ſo great Villanies and Treaſons, under

der the Pretext of *God's Cauſe*, againſt both *King* and *Government*, I thought I could do no leſs than ſnatch up all *Weapons* that might defend the *Publick*, and hope I have not lighted upon one with a *double Edge*.

I have endeavoured that my Diſcourſe ſhould be onely a Continuance of yours; and that, as you taught Men how to *Believe*, ſo I might inſtruct

ſtruct them how to *Live*. For, as Dr. *Donne* well obſerves, Though *Chriſtianity* is the *Fort* or *Citadel*, yet *Vertue* and *Moral Honeſty* are its *Fences* and *Out-works*, whereby alone it is teneable. Wherefore, I deſigned this Treatiſe of mine to be onely an *Addition*, or rather the *Conſequence* of yours; encouraging Men to Live up to the *Vertue* of that *Doctrine* you teach. Which, with your Pardon for the preſent,

preſent, and Friendſhip for the future, is the higheſt *Ambition* of,

S I R,

Your moſt Faithful Friend,

and Servant,

C. B.

Religio Laici.

The Occaſion of this Treatiſe.

THere is not any Meditation hath given me greater trouble, than when I think, That a Doctrine ſo neceſſary, as the Knowledge of God, with the true Way to ſerve and worſhip him, together with the Means to attain everlaſting Salvation, ſhould be ſo variouſly deliver'd and taught in divers Ages and Countries; as alſo urged in ſuch perplext and difficult terms; (which by the many Volumes

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of this Argument, in ſeveral Languages, may appear;) and after all this, yet to find it preſented to me under ſuch terrible Menaces and Execrations, as if, among the many Churches in the World, I did not adhere to the right, (which each claimed to be theirs) I could not juſtly hope for ſalvation; but, on the contrary, expect eternal Torture, without any proſpect of Relief.

Being therefore in this doubtful and dangerous condition, I did at laſt conclude with my ſelf, that one of theſe two things was to be done:

Methods of Enquiry into Religion.

Firſt, That (notwithſtanding the Affronts and Threats wherewith

with the Prieſts on every ſide would deter us from all other Religions, as well as Invitations, Promiſes, and comfortable Doctrines, by which they would draw us to their own, in any particular Church,) I was bound, either to ſtudy with an impartial mind, not only all the ſeveral Religions; but likewiſe the Controverſies amongſt them in divers Ages, Languages and Countries. And for this purpoſe, not only to acquire the Tongues uſed heretofore, or at this preſent time throughout the Univerſe: But alſo to read the ſeveral Authors that have written upon theſe Arguments; and together with them to confer thoſe Learned men, who (though they had not publiſhed any thing in writing)

might yet be no leſs able to edifie me, than the former. Or,

Secondly, To fix upon ſome Fundamental Articles agreed upon by all that I could meet with, and conſider afterwards how far they might conduce to my ſalvation.

The former of theſe two I ſoon perceiv'd to be impoſſible; for, whoſe private Affairs at home, or publick Duty to his Native Country, will permit him to take ſuch Journies to all the Quarters of the World? Whoſe Eſtate or Revenue will furniſh him with Money for ſo long and great an Undertaking? Or whoſe Conſtitution is of that ſtrength and ability, that, were he to eſcape all the Dangers he muſt inevitably meet with, could yet undergo ſo immenſe a travel

travel and labour? Whoſe Memory could either contain all the Works of the ſeveral Languages and Religions; or Judgment decide the different Opinions and Faiths pretended under the Authority of ſo many great Churches? which courſe yet unleſs he purſued to the end, he could not with Juſtice ſay he had performed his Duty. For ſince the determining finally of any matter of Importance, where Parties are not heard on all ſides, is not only againſt common Reaſon, but contrary even to the ordinary practice of Juſtice in all other caſes; he muſt think himſelf, in that the moſt important and ſerious buſineſs that can befall Mankind, obliged to make as particular and exact a ſearch

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and examination of Religions, as is poſſible.

But here we will ſuppoſe, that after diligent Enquiry, one might learn what was taught in this or that Country, under ſome general Notions; (though no where ſufficiently, according to all the Tenents, Rites, and Ceremonies taught or practiſed amongſt them,) yet how could the knowledge of any one Religion alone give him ſatisfaction, eſpecially when he ſhould find it controverted in ſome other Country, and where as able men, at leaſt in all other points of Learning, might in great numbers be found? Shall he, becauſe his Birth or Affection enclines him to one Country or Religion more than another, ſo factiouſly embrace it, as to think

think no other to be good or acceptable to God, where men do the best they can to serve him, and live well? Must he prejudge all other Religions as erroneous and false, when as yet he hath not heard what they can alledge for the justifying of their Faith? No; but too too many are guilty of this Partiality; for that, *till we receive a Spirit of Judgment to discern the right way, every way is thought to be wrong, but that which we are brought up in: And pious Education doth the same in this latter Age, which Miracles did formerly*; as the Learned *Gregory* well observes.

Howbeit, because something here must be attempted, lest we should seem wholly to forsake our selves, I did in my par-

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ticular conceive nothing ſo proper for my purpoſe, as to look upon thoſe Countries chiefly from whence all other Learning and Sciences did originally flow; which conſideration, as it brought me to thoſe Provinces wherein the *Greek Tongue* did anciently flouriſh, as containing in it ſelf alone almoſt all humane Literature: So, when I found the Inhabitants thereof in ſo miſerable an Eſtate, that there was little more than Ignorance, Captivity and Barbariſme amongſt them, I did not think fit to inſiſt there; ſince, however their wits might be as excellent now as in former times, they ſeemed to want not only the Means which might enable them to find out any Learned Truth, but even the

the heart to believe it. Neither did their Ancient or almoſt univerſally taught Religion (being *Ethnick* and *Pagan*) any way affect me there, or in any Country elſe: ſince being now intermitted, and diſcontinued for many Ages, I could not but think it built in great part upon weak and uncertain Principles, more eſpecially in thoſe Points, which are now wholly antiquated and aboliſhed.

From hence therefore I caſt mine Eye upon *Italy*; as the Country wherein, not only all the Ancient Learning of the *Greeks*, but alſo of the *Romans*, was carefully preſerved and taught; But as here again I found almoſt all they produced in point of Religion to be con-

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troverted among other Nations in *Europe*, with much acrimonie and Bitterness; and that besides among the several Opinions and Sects the subsequent times have brought forth, the latter for the most part have dissented more from them than the former; insomuch that the *Puritan* hath departed more from them than the *Protestant*, and the *Protestant* than the *Lutheran*; I could not so safely rely upon them, as not to enquire, why the Tenents of the *Church* of *Rome* are so much deserted? But as here again I found my self intangled in Controversies, I thought fit to make a pause before I engaged my self too far in those Tumultuous and uncharitable Disputes. And the rather, because I found that even

even the knowledge of the different Sects of Christian Religion alone, took up more time in the study of them than I could possibly hope to obtain, altho' I should live beyond the ordinary age of man; so that whereas I thought my self obliged for the discharge of my Conscience to study not only all Religions that have been or are in the World, I found the *Romanish* Religion in its divers Sects alone of greater Intricacie, than that I could by any Reason or Authority dissolve or unty the many Scruples or Knots in them: since flying sometimes from *Reason* to *Faith*, and then again from *Faith* to *Reason*, with a singular agility in both, I found my self unable to follow them in any

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any one certain way. I confeſs, that if they had adhered ſingly to either of theſe two, nothing could have ſcandalized me; ſince that which was delivered upon *Reaſon*, I ſhould have examined, and finally accepted upon the ſame ground: and as well ſhould I have believed thoſe Points of *Faith*, which were delivered me upon the Reverend Authority of the *Church*; eſpecially, when it could have been proved, that any former *Church* or *Congregation* had under their hands and Seals, or in any other Authentick manner ſubſcribed, as eye-Witneſſes to that they conſign'd unto Poſterity, and not as Hearers only; it being of great moment in the affirmation of things paſt, to ſet down what they

they knew certainly, and to come afterwards to what was told them by others, which they again had from others, and so perhaps from many descents; especially, if such things were related, as neither they from whom they heard it, nor indeed any mortal man by Natural Means could know. Neither would it be sufficient to say, that their *Knowledge* was *Supernatural* or *Divine*, since as that is more than could be known in following times, so, when it were granted, it would inferr little to me, but that which I would believe without it: For if any under the name of a *Prophet* should bid me do a Sin, or be Impenitent for Sins done, I should not believe him, though he pretended

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a thouſand *Revelations* for it: And on the other ſide, if he bid me be Vertuous and Penitent, though he had not any ſhadow of *Revelation* for it, I ſhould give entire Credit to him.

The Validity of Revelation proved by its Doctrine.

That therefore the Certainty of that Doctrine, which is called *Revealed*, or the word of God in any Age or Country, comes not to me ſimply either from the Authority of him that ſaid the holy Spirit did ſo dictate the word to him: No, nor from the Authority of them that believed it: (how many or great ſoever:) but from the Goodneſs of the Doctrine it ſelf; without which, I ſhould believe

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but little in any extraordinary kind. Every man, in what Age or Country, that teacheth goodneſs, ſpeaks the word of God to me; and if the Contrary, he ſhall never make me believe, he knoweth God, or heard him ſpeak ſo much as one ſyllable, much leſs that he is ſo familiar with God, as to know him by his Voice.

Four ſeveral kinds of Revelations.

The Learned *Toſtatus* mentions four ſeveral ways whereby God is ſaid to have made Revelations in former times; as for Example: *Firſt*, when God and his Angels aſſumed a viſible ſhape, as when he appeared to *Gideon*, *Judg.* 6. and to *Manoah* and his Wife, *Judg.* 13. *Secondly*,

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condly, When he was not ſeen, but only heard, as *Numb.* 7. and when he called *Samuel*, 1 *Sam.* 3. *Thirdly*, When he wrought only upon the Imaginations of men, ſleeping or waking; as when God told *Abimelech* in a *Dream*, that he was a dead man, for taking away another mans Wife, *Gen.* 20. *Fourthly*, and *laſtly*, When God raiſeth the Underſtanding to know thoſe things which otherwiſe he could not know, either by a kind of Extaſie, or without; and of this kind was *Paul*'s rapture into the *third Heavens*; at which time it may be doubtful whether the Soul remained in the Body or no.

Having thus now recited his ſeveral kinds of *Revelations*, it will be neceſſary in the next place

place to enquire, whether there might not be Fallacies in all theſe ways? And when there was no Fallacy, whether their Proof was not only by ſingle Witneſſes? The *Popiſh Clergie* (in ſuch a caſe) will tell us, That we muſt believe reverently of things delivered to us in *Holy Writ*, for that they have neither Errour nor Fraud in them: And if that does not ſatisfie you, they will then tell you, you muſt come to them for a further Anſwer: Not conſidering, that if the *Gentiles* ſhould require the ſame credit to be given to their *Revelations* upon their own ſingle Teſtimony, how we ſhould do to ſhake them off: the ſame Reaſon lying for us to believe the one, as the other, both equally depending on *Faith*.

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A Dialogue concerning Revelations.

Therefore in the first place, I should demand in a Rational and Judicial way, how I could be assured, that the Priests *had received a* Revelation, *and what was the time, place, and manner thereof? In Answer to which, I conceive the* Priests *would tell me; That* Laicks *ought not further to enquire into such* Mysteries *than becomes them; that if this their* Revelation *were not accepted as an unquestionable and necessary Truth, there could be no cause thereof, but an* obdurate heart, *and want of* Divine Grace *in me; that if the* Sacerdotal word *might not be taken concerning the* Truth *of the said* Revelation,

lation, *there was no other way to inform me thereof: It being* Gods *manner to ſpeak to his beloved Servants, and not to ſuch groſs* Sinners *as I was; and to be* brief, *that if I did not give entire credit to this* Revelation *of theirs, it was for want of* Faith: *And therefore, that no better counſel could be given me, than to pray that all obſtructions might be taken away, and inſtead of my* heart *of* ſtone, *that I might receive an* heart *of* fleſh, *ſuch as may be capable of this* heavenly Illumination. Finally, *They would reply nothing concerning the* time *or* manner *of their* Revelation, *but only in general ſay, that the* Place *was* God's holy Temple, *where none could be partakers of the* Word of God, *but ſuch only as were his*

his near Servants, and did ordinarily take their reſt and ſleep therein.

Now to this I ſhould Anſwer, That if I might not know the time *and* manner, *when and how this their* Revelation *was made, I would yet gladly be informed, what* Language *was uſed betwixt them, and whether the* words *were of* God's immediate invention, *or that there were only certain* Notes *and* Characters *in uſe betwixt them, whereby they underſtood one another? Or otherwiſe, if they had not a particular* Language *betwixt them, which was intelligible; whether* God *ſpake the ordinary* Language *of that Country, and in what* Tone; *whether the ſame were* lowder *than* Thunder, *or only the* ordinary heighth, *or whether*

whether lower *yet, by ſome* cloſe *or* ſecret expreſſion, *ſomewhat leſs than a* whiſper? *To which I believe the* Prieſts *would* Reply, *That if a* King *or* Principal Magiſtrate *did ſend me a* Meſſage *or* Command *by ſome one of his* known Officers, *I would not then preſume to make all theſe* Queſtions, *they being not only uncivil, but alſo impertinent and derogatory to the* Supreme Authority, *and therefore that they who were known* Miniſters *of* God, *did, without giving further account, require Obeence from me in his* Name. *But notwithſtanding all this, I ſhould again take the boldneſs to ask them, (ſuppoſing they heard ſuch words) how yet they could know that* God *ſpake them, and whether they were ſo familiar with*

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the perſon of that God, *as to know him by his* Voice, *and diſtinguiſh him from all others? How they could aſſure themſelves firmly, that it was no* inferiour Spirit *that gave them this* Revelation, *there being* Spirits *of both ſorts, both* good *and* bad, *which uſe to deliver* Oracles *and* Revelations, *according to the* Doctrine *of the* Manichees, *who founded their Opinions upon that ſentence, viz.* that the Devil is the God of this world. *But again, ſuppoſing it was a* good Spirit *that ſpoke, whether* Camillus, *or his* Boy *who waited on him in the* Temple, *did hear or underſtand the* Voice *as well as himſelf? Here I know the* Prieſts *Anſwer would be, That neither himſelf, nor any elſe could come to the knowledge of* God's *Will, but by*

by their means and conveyance: And for the reſt would again require my Obedience, on peril of my being condemn'd as an Infidel; *thinking by theſe words at leaſt to overawe me.*

But this would be ſo far from terrifying me, that it would but put into my head more Scruples, concerning the Truth of their Revelation? *when purſuing my way, I ſhould gladly demand of him, how yet I could be aſſured, that in the repeating of this their* Oracle *or* Revelation, *they had omitted no part thereof through forgetfulneſs; or added any thing to it by a* Paraphraſe, *or* Explication; *And* briefly, *whether nothing were interweaved or changed therein?*

The Prieſts *would here aſſuredly reply, That it was but a pro-*

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prophane part in me to doubt any thing were either added to, or taken from the Divine Revelation, *much leſs any thing mixed or interwoven with it: and that the ſame* God, *who gave them this* Revelation, *did and would preſerve it entire in their memory; for further proof whereof, they were ready to ſet it down, and ſign it under their Hands and Seals, that ſo it might be tranſmitted to Poſterity, as an* Authentick Record: *To which alſo, the* Amanuenſes *or* Coppiers *of it might repair to correct all that ſhould be depraved, either by their careleſneſs, or wilful perverſion of the Senſe thereof, that ſo their Errors might afterwards be rectified, atteſted and ſubſcribed by ſufficient Witneſſes, as agreeing with the* Original:

nal; *there being no other Means so good to aſcertain us* Laicks, *that nothing therein was counterfeit*, &c. *Which Method* (*I confeſs*) *if it had been uſed in all* Ages *and* Countries *where* Revelations *are ſaid to have been made in private to* Prieſts, *would have been much approved*; *ſince* Copies *of* Copies, *through many Deſcents, may be ſubject to many* Corruptions, *eſpecially among thoſe who would draw all things to their own* Intereſt; *which might as well have become theſe latter Times, as the former*; *ſince our Modern* Prieſts (*for the moſt part*) *turn* Religion *into* Faction, *ſtriving to render all others of different Perſwaſions* (*though in the leaſt matters*) *odious. Which Bitterneſs of Spirit we find not evidently remarked among the*

Heathen Prieſts; *ſo that how Ignorant and Falſe ſoever they were, yet are they not recorded to have been* Incendiaries, *and* Perſecutors *of one another even unto* Death, *for* Religion *and* Conſcience *ſake: No, they had no ſuch* helliſh *Contrivances as the* Pariſian *and* Hibernian Maſſacres; *no ſuch Inſtruments of the* Devil, *as* Ravilliac, Clement, *and the* Prieſt *that poyſon'd our* Engliſh Monarch *in the* Euchariſt; *no ſuch* Traiterous Conſpiracies *as the* Powder-plot: *Nor did they uſe to convert one another to their Opinions by* Fire *and* Fagot, *and* Roſting Kings *alive, as the* Spaniards *did in the* Indies. *He that compares but the Behaviour of thoſe of the Religious among the* Heathens, *with the Carriage of our* Popiſh Biſhops *here*

here in England *before the* Reformation, *as related by our own* Christian *Writers, would take the* Heathen Priests *for much the better* Christians *of the two.*

So that, notwithstanding all this, I should not give the Priests *over so, but at least tell them, I could have wished they had proceeded more clearly with me; since the more they debased my Understanding in* Divine Mysteries, *the more was I obliged to stand to my* Common Reason, *until they had made all things manifest or intelligible to me, without going about to convince me of* Infidelity, *because I* believed *not more than I* understood: *or when a further* Belief *were required, I hoped they would not charge me to believe it any otherwise than as a thing possible, or at most but like-*

ly, ſince this was all I could do, when God had given me no ſufficient Revelation *for the confirming of theirs. And to affirm it a good Plea in the* Court *of* Heaven, *to ſay, That a Man began at the* Faith *that was taught in his* Native Country; *Who might not then excuſe himſelf for adhering to the* groſſeſt Superſtition *that can be imagined in any* Age *or* Country *whatever, where no leſs Eſteem and Veneration was given publickly to their* Sacerdotal College, *than is now paid to the preſent* Church *of* Rome *in* Italy *and* Spain. *Finally, therefore, I ſhould ask them, How any* Prieſt *could aſſure and ſatisfie my Conſcience, that the* Revelation *made to him did ſo concern me, that I muſt embrace it as an undoubted* Axiom, *or* Truth? *To which (I*

am

am confident) *they would anſwer, as formerly, That they had diſcharged their Duty in delivering* Gods Word, *and that I ought to take heed leſt I be ſeverely puniſhed for want of* Faith, *and ſo leave me, after having with much* gravity *expreſſed their* ſorrow *for my* incorrigible ſtubborn Heart, &c.

But, notwithſtanding all this, I do not yet deny, but that *Revelations* may be made to Men either *ſleeping* or *waking*; but where, I ſuppoſe, (as we find in *Holy Writ*) earneſt *Prayers* have been made before-hand, and ſome *publick* and *miraculous Confirmation* of the thing *revealed* hath followed. However, unleſs the thing in it ſelf be right *good* and *honeſt*, I ſhould not conceive it was *God* that ſpake, but

ſome *Evil Spirit* that would deceive me; it having pleaſed God ſo to implant the Love of *Goodneſs* and *Truth* in the *Soul*, that he hath made them a part of *Common Reaſon*, and conſpicuous by their own *Light*; from which therefore if we recede, we ſhall find our ſelves caſt not onely into much Errour and Darkneſs, but even in the Court of our own *Conſciences* criminal and condemned: For which Cauſe alſo I believe *God* is ſo ſparing in making publick *Relations*, becauſe if Men did wholly truſt to them, it might be a means of making them neglect their proper Duties. *It would be* (as the Learned *Gregory* in his *Poſthuma* obſerves) *a Stumbling-block to the* Gentiles, *when they found it read in* Oſea, *that*

that God commanded a Prophet *to commit Adultery: and in* Exodus, *that he taught his own People how to cozen the* Egyptians: *How could they believe* (ſaith he) *that there was no* God *like the* God *of the* Hebrews, *when they ſhould find in the Scriptures, that even this* God *had alſo a* Right-hand *and a* Son? *Or that if he had been ſo much better than thoſe of the* Heathen, *was it likely that* Aaron *his own* High Prieſt, *would have preferred their* Apis *or* Egyptian Calf *before him?* But the Reaſon of all this is, becauſe to *unenlightned Nature* theſe Paſſages might ſeem inconſiſtent with the Attributes of the *Deus Optimus Maximus*; and for that (as our aforeſaid Learned Author well notes) *all ways of* Religion *would ſeem*

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ſtrange, but that we are taught betimes to fear: and till we receive a Spirit of Judgment to diſcern the Right way, every Way is thought to be Wrong, but that which we are brought up in. And thus much for *Publick Revelations.*

Of Viſions and Apparitions.

Now if any Man ſhould ſay a *Viſion* appear'd to him, I ſhould believe him as far as it was fit to credit a *ſingle Witneſs* in ſo rare a Caſe; but certainly I ſhould not depart from my *Common Reaſon*, whatſoever he ſhould pretend to teach upon thoſe Grounds; and from *ſingle Witneſſes*, and no more, the greateſt *Miracles* in all Vulgar Superſtitions are moſtly derived, as would

would appear to any one that ſhould look back from *Age* to *Age*, to the Original of all ſuch *wonderful Narrations*: Or, if more Perſons than one are ſaid at firſt to have concurred in the Relation, it ought again to be conſidered, whether they that would eſtabliſh it did not acquire much *Authority*, and procure many Advantages thereby unto themſelves; and that either of *Honour*, or *Riches*, the one being as prevalent with the *Vain-glorious*, as the other with the *Covetous*? The *Nature* of Men being for the moſt part prone always to entertain ſuch *Beliefs* as turn to their own *Benefit*.

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Teſtimonies Weak.

Furthermore, in my Opinion it is to be obſerved, That as it is not ſafe to truſt abſolutely to any *ſingle* or *weak Teſtimony* in Matters of great Conſequence; ſo will it be much more dangerous to frame new *Doctrines* or *Concluſions* out of them, for directing of our ſelves in the whole Courſe of our Life; ſince *Errour* may be thus multiplied without end.

Of Miracles.

Theſe *Conſiderations* therefore brought me at laſt to be more ſparing in the Belief of *Miraculous Narrations*, and eſpecially for the Building any new *Doctrines*

ſtrines upon them; ſince *Impoſtors*, ſuch as *Jannes* and *Jambres*, have been ſaid to do *Miracles*, whoſe *Egyptian Doctrines* I yet ſhould never believe. I might ſay ſomething alſo of *Apollonius Tyanæus* and *Simon Magus*, who (however they may be believed to have done *Miracles*) did yet not teach any *Univerſal Doctrine*, to which Aſſent was given. Neither ſhall I inſiſt upon the little Credit given heretofore to the feigned *Miracles* or *Revelations* by *Pagan Prieſts* among the more Judicious ſort of the *Gentiles*.

Wherefore, it is no good Argument to ſay, *That ſuch a Man did* Miracles, *and therefore I believe all he ſaith*: Since thoſe things may ſeem *Miraculous* to my weak Capacity, which ap-

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pear not ſo to wiſer Men. Beſides, things may be done by *Natural* Means, which ſome may miſtake for *Miracles* and *Conjuration*; as all Books of *Chymiſtry* and *Natural Philoſophy* can teſtifie: *And upon this* Vulgar Ignorance *it is* (ſaith *Monſieur Naudæus*, in his Treatiſe of *Magick*) *that the moſt Ingenious and Learnedeſt Men in the World have been defamed as* Conjurers *and* Wizards, *becauſe their Accuſers were* Fools *and* Blockheads. Again, by *Confederacy*, where one helps the other to abuſe the People; of which kind, Examples have been frequent, and ſo well known, that I ſhall omit troubling my Reader or my ſelf with them in ſo ſmall a *Treatiſe*.

Of

Of Prophecy and Prophets.

In like manner ſhould their pretended *Prophecies* draw me as little to any *New Religion*; ſince one ſhall hardly meet with a *Prophecy* delivered ſo clearly and ſo perſpicuouſly, as to mark out and diſtinguiſh from all others any Perſon or Event in ſubſequent Times. For my part, as I could never yet eſteem any thing to be an undoubted *Prophecy*, which in the firſt place was not like a *Picture*, (wherein it is not enough to deſcribe or Paint one Member or Part of the Face or Body, unleſs the Symetry and other Parts were together repreſented with the outward Stature, Colour, and Faſhion:) ſo likewiſe I ſhould not much

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much regard the Exterior Form, if his Actions were not repreſented to future Times in ſuch manner, as the *Prophecy* might be like an *Hiſtory*, wherein it is required that the *Time*, *Place*, and *Manner* of all his Actions ſhould be deſcribed ſo particularly, as to diſtinguiſh the whole Courſe of his Life from all others. And that therefore many of the doubtful and obſcure *Predictions* that have been attributed to divers, who from thence have acquired the Names of *Prophets*, ſeem to be little more than bold Conjectures, which might in ſome Age or other take its Events: there being nothing, I will not ſay, *likely* or *poſſible*, but even *unlikely*, and onely not *impoſſible*, that in ſome *Time*, *Place*, or *Man-*

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ner will not have its Effect and Fulfilling. Wherefore, if any Man hath undertaken heretofore, or ſhall yet in this Age undertake to *Propheſie*, upon what vain ground ſoever, yet if he get that Credit among future Ages as to be thought a *Prophet*, he will find thoſe that ſhall apply his Words to ſome Action or Event that did or will (in all likelihood) follow; which Motives made me as doubtful of their *Prophecies*, as of ſuch *Miracles* and *Revelations* I formerly mentioned. *Obſopæus* is ſaid to have put forth Books which ſpake plainer of *Chriſt*, than the *Prophets* of the *Old Teſtament* did; which our Learned *Criticks* have nevertheleſs rejected as *ſpurious*.

The *Heavenly Bodies* had outward

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ward Worſhip given them from the Excellency of their Natures; but the *Heathen Prieſts* had their chief Credit from their *Prophecies* and *Predictions*: who contented not themſelves with the perſwading the People that they had *Revelations*, unleſs they could perſwade them further, that they could foretel things to come, and ſo acquire to themſelves the Name of *Prophets*. The manner of *Prediction* among the *Jews* was by *Dreams*, *Urim*, or *Prophets*; and *Saul*'s throwing off his Clothes, lying naked upon the Ground a Day and a Night, and ſo Propheſied, 1 *Sam.* 19. and by the *Witch* of *Endor*, to whom *Saul* had recourſe in his Extremities, who deſired her to raiſe up *Samuel* to him, which ſhe doing,

Samuel

Samuel appeared, and told *Saul* what ſhould follow, 1 *Sam.* 28. The *Urim* and *Thummim* were two Precious Stones ſo called, the one *Light*, and the other *Truth* or *Integrity*; the one an *Onyx* or *Sardonix*, and the other an *Emrald*; out of the vibration of whoſe Beauty, *Oracles* and *Prophecies* were called and utter'd: In imitation whereof, the *Devil* and *Kelly* together deluded old *Dr. Dee* with their *Angelical Stone* (as they called it) in *Queen Elizabeths* time; if you will give Credit to the Record thereof, preſerved in the famous *Cottonian Library*, and ſince publiſhed in Print by *Dr. Caſaubon*. *Varro* ſaith, That the *Ancient Prieſts* of *Egypt* (who were alſo *Judges*) wore upon their Necks a great *Emrald*, called *Truth*.

Some

Some of the *Rabbins* attribute not ſo much to the *Stones*, as to certain Writings under them.

Judgments made of future Events by remarquing the Configurations and Operations of the *Planets* and *Stars*, as alſo *Predictions* made from *Natural Cauſes*, are, without all queſtion, not onely lawful, but commendable, although of little certainty: But the cunning *Artiſts* the *Prieſts*, who in *Egypt* were anciently *Aſtrologers*, uſed to mingle with their *Divinations*, *Lies* of their own Invention, whereby they acquired more than by their *Truths*. The word for *Divinations* in general is *Mantike*, which *Plato* in *Phædro* derives from *Munike*, ſignifying *furious* or *mad*.

The difference between *Prophets*,

phets, and thoſe that were in *Ecſtaſies* or *Trances*, was this: The *Prophets* were ſaid to run up and down raging and crying, whereas the *Extotekoi* appearing devoid of Senſe and Underſtanding, ſeem'd little leſs than dead, till they awaked out of their *Trances*; wherein alſo they remained ſo long, that they had time enough to deviſe ſomething which might delude the People. By this kind of *Impoſture*, *Mahomet* did often prevail, when he aroſe from his *Fits* of the *Falling Sickneſs*. Alſo from theſe ſorts of *Raptures* anciently it may be ſuppoſed the *Ethnick* Narration of the *Elyzian Fields*, and their *Separate State of Souls after Death*, together with their manner of *Reward and Puniſhment*, were at firſt deviſed,

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deviſed, and then vented to the People. Neither have the *Chriſtian* Times been without ſuch Saints, (I mean not the true and holy ones:) but ſome that pretending to *Sanctity*, have in their *Ecſtaſies* (whether counterfeit, or not) feigned that they had ſeen *Souls* in *Purgatory*; whereof the *Legend* will inform you more.

Nevertheleſs, It is obſerved, that the *Souls* of Men, having many more *Faculties* than what the Repreſentation of Worldly Objects can excite or call up, and ſometimes freeing themſelves from their uſual Employments, and the Objects they meet with in this Life, aſcend to the *Contemplation* and even *Viſion* of *Divine Objects*, making themſelves thus capable of know-

knowing not onely things paſt, but thoſe that are to come: to which kind of *Ecſtaſie*, whether *St. Paul's Rapture* into the *third Heavens* may be referred, I leave to others to judge. In like manner, we read of divers ſtrange and incredible *Ecſtaſies* that have hapned to Men in this kind: as (not to mention our Modern *Voyages*, which ſpeak of *Indians* that in their *Trances* will diſcover what Ships are coming to their *Iſlands*, and from what *Ports*, many Months before their Arrival;) the like hapned of old to *Pamphilus* the Son of *Neocles*, who (as *Plato* ſaith) lay ten days in a *Trance*, and afterwards told Wonders. But to credit theſe things is altogether matter of *Faith*, and not of *Common Reaſon*; from whence

I cannot recede, or build any new *Doctrine* upon ſuch Reports; eſpecially, when there is no Divine Authority like the Scriptures for it, nor Original Atteſtation, that the *Prophecy* was conſigned unto us in thoſe very Words wherein they are now extant; and for the reſt, that they are more obſcure than that an unqueſtionable Certainty may be built upon them. But herein I am content to let every Man uſe his own Judgment, and therefore ſhall quit this Subject with one Obſervation, which is, That by reading *Mother Shiptons Prophecies* when we are *Boys*, we do the better reliſh *Noſtredamus* when we are Men: eſpecially ſince every vain-glorious *Expoſitor* of ſuch *Prophecies* looks upon himſelf

as

as little leſs than a *Minor-Prophet.*

Now All theſe Points having been for a long time debated and examined by me, to the beſt of my Underſtanding, I did think fit the rather to ſtudy and inquire out thoſe *Common Principles* of *Religion* I could any where meet with; onely before I undertook this great Task, I thought it not amiſs to adviſe upon what Grounds the Controverted Points amongſt them did move. But, as here I obſerved nothing but matter of *Faith*, or *Belief* concerning Things paſt, queſtioned in any Age or Country; ſo did I the more eaſily paſs by it, to come to thoſe *Articles* which were grounded not onely upon *Reaſon* and *Univerſal Conſent* of *Religions*,

ligions, but are (I believe) extant and operative in the Hearts of all Men, which are not prepoſſeſs'd and obſtructed with erroneous *Doctrines*, and (I am ſure) moſt deeply engraven in mine. Which being done, I thought it my Duty to inquire, Whether by an apt Connexion of the Parts thereof, I might fix ſo ſolid a Foundation, that I might repoſe thereon, as the firſt and principal Ground of all *Religious Worſhip*.

The *Articles* which I propoſe, are *Five* in number; and the ſame which the great Oracle and Commander of his Time, for Wit, Learning, and Courage, *tam Marti quam Mercurio*, the the *Lord Herbert, Baron of Cherbury*, delivered; and which (I am confident) are ſo *Catholique*

or

or *Univerſal*, that all the *Religions* that ever were, are, or (I believe) ever ſhall be, did, do, and will embrace them. The *Articles* are theſe.

The Five Catholick or Univerſal Articles of Religion.

I. *That there is One onely Supreme God.*

II. *That He chiefly is to be Worſhipped.*

III. *That Vertue, Goodneſs, and Piety, accompanied with Faith in, and Love to God, are the beſt ways of Worſhipping Him.*

IV. *That we ſhould repent of our Sins from the bottom of our Hearts, and turn to the Right Way.*

V. And laſtly, *That there is*

a Reward and Puniſhment after this Life.

Now of each of theſe in particular.

Firſt Article, Of One God.

As to the Firſt Article: Tho divers *Godheads* or *Divine Natures* were celebrated or worſhipped in ſeveral Ages or Countries throughout the World, yet there is no Agreement or Conſent, but onely concerning *One Supreme God*, under the *Attributes* of *Optimus* and *Maximus*; the one ſuppoſing his *Providence*, the other his *Power*, in the higheſt degree and extention: and both theſe together inferring his *Wiſdom, Juſtice, Mercy*, and the reſt. Thus the

the *Heathens* beſtowed ſeveral Names upon the *Deity*, according to the ſeveral Parts of the *Univerſe*; calling him, in the Starry Heaven and *Æther*, *Jupiter*; in the Air, *Juno*; in the Winds, *Æolus*; in the Sea, *Neptune*; in the Earth and Subterraneous Parts, *Pluto*; in Learning, Knowledge, and Invention, *Mercury*, *Minerva*, and the *Muſes*; in War, *Mars*; in Pleaſure, *Venus*; in Corn and the Production of Fruits of the Earth, *Ceres*; in Wine, *Bacchus*; and the like. Under which ſeveral Appellations were ſignified onely the various Operations of the *One Immenſe God*: which makes *Minutius* well obſerve, That *Qui Jovem principem volunt, falluntur in nomine, ſed de una Poteſtate conſentiunt.*

Second Article, That God is to be Worſhipped.

As to the Second Article; Tho divers other *Deities*, *Godheads*, or *Divine Natures*, have been celebrated or worſhipped more or leſs, in ſome inferiour or ſubordinate kind; yet there is no *Agreement* or *Univerſal Conſent* concerning the *Worſhip* of any other than the *Supreme God*; in whom, Authors generally ſay, all other *Godheads* or *Divine Natures* are *worſhipped*.

Third Article, How God is to be Worſhipped.

As to the Third Article: Tho divers *Rites*, *Myſteries*, and *Sacra's*, (as the *Romans* call them) were

were introduced to the *Worſhip* of the *Supreme God*; yet that there is no Univerſal Conſent or Agreement concerning them, but that a pure and untainted Mind, (as being conſcious in it ſelf of no Unworthineſs) together with a Virtuous and Pious Life, (teſtified by the Expreſſions of Goodneſs and Charity to all Men) and accompanied with *Love*, *Faith*, and *Hope* in *God*, were undoubted ways of Serving him: *ſit pura mente colendus.* The Ancient *Jews* and Modern *Chriſtians* have many *Rites* and *Ceremonies* common with the *Gentiles*; which is more than vulgar *Divines* do imagine. Moſt of the *Jewiſh Laws* and *Rites* were practiſed indifferently among the *Heathens*, or at leaſt did not much vary

from them, as the diligent Searchers into *Antiquity* well know. The *Gentiles*, as well as the *Jews*, held the moſt ſubſtantial Parts of *Moſes* his Doctrine, without differing in much more than certain particular Laws, more proper for that Country than any other; as, their not eating *Swines Fleſh*, and making *Adultery* Death. If it be ſaid, That that Precept in the *Decalogue* (againſt *Graven Images*) was particular to the *Jews*; It will be found a Miſtake: for that the *Perſians*, and otheir neighbouring Nations, concurred therein, as well as the *Jews*; as alſo in moſt of their other *Commandments*: Thus *Feriari Deo* is accounted a kind of keeping a *Sabboth*, *&c.* amongſt the *Heathens*: And *St. Auſtin* (*lib.* 20. *ch.*19.

ch. 19. againſt *Fauſtus*) ſaith, That the *Gentiles* were not ſo grievouſly lapſed into the Worſhip of *Falſe Gods*, but that they retained the Opinion of *One True God*, from whom every Nature whatſoever is derived. *Finally*, Whatſoever tends to Mans Perfection, is eminently and primarily in *God*: But the *Notions* of *Providence*, *Wiſdom*, *Juſtice*, *Mercy*, *Love*, &c. tend to his Perfection; *Ergo*, Hence the *Gentiles* took their Riſe from themſelves, as believing that they were *Gods Children*, and made after his *Image*.

Fourth Article, Of Repentance and Sacrifices.

As to the Fourth Article: Tho *Sacrifices* for the aboliſhing

of Sin of more than one ſort, as alſo *Expiations*, *Luſtrations*, and divers other *Rites* invented by the *Sacerdotal Order*, were uſed for the *purging* of Men from *Sin*; yet was there no *Univerſal Conſent* or Agreement concerning them. But that *Repentance* is a certain Sign of *Gods Spirit* working in us, and the onely Remedy for Sin that is declared publickly to all Mankind, and the moſt rational way to return to *God* and *Vertue*, is by Univerſal Conſent eſtabliſhed every where, without ſo much as the leaſt Contradiction. Not that I think *God's* Juſtice can be ſatisfied by meer *Repentance*, and turning to a good Life; but that a further *Satisfaction* or *Reparation* for our Offences againſt the *Divine Majeſty* is required.

Yet

Yet as there is no Univerſal Agreement concerning the Means how this is effected, (it being of greater Scrutiny than Mans Reaſon can attain unto) ſo I ſhall in part wave this Diſcourſe; and the rather, for that many do not ſee why (according to the ordinary Rules of Juſtice) God ſhould puniſh one Man for the Sins of another: or, to go further, for that Frailty of our own Nature, which without our Conſent was beſtowed upon us? To which, give me leave to add theſe few Remarques. 1. *Decipimur ſpecie recti:* We have not a true Judgment of *Good* and *Bad*; eſteeming many things Evil, which in themſelves are not ſo. An Hiſtory drawn in a Picture may

Of Good and Evil.

have in it Repreſentations of Battels, Slaughters, Drunkards, Harlots, and Firing of Cities, Shipwracks, or the like; and yet may be as lovely a Piece of Painting, as if it repreſented an *Aſſembly* of *Divines*: And ſo, perhaps, in a Natural Conſideration, may be thought an Age that produces ſuch Actions, as well as if it brought forth none but Examples of *Vertue*. 2. We denominate *Good* and *Evil* onely from our particular Intereſt; ſo that perhaps our *Vertues* may prove but *Falſe Money*, of no *intrinſick Value*, although it bear the Stamp of our Approbation upon it. 3. A Well-being is the primary Appetite of Nature in all things; and ſo as we judge any thing more or leſs agreeing or contrary thereto,

to, ſo are we more or leſs inclining or averſe thereto: whereupon our Will, either for or againſt any thing, to do or forbear any thing, doth always follow our Judgment; which Judgment is framed by ſeveral things, *viz.* the Temper of our Brain, & our Education, together with the various Encounters, Succeſſes, and Experiments in the Courſe of our Lives: all which (it is manifeſt) are not in our own power, but proceeds from the Temper of our Parents, the Diet, Climate, and Cuſtoms of our Country, with diverſity of Occurrents and Conjunctures of the Times; which are produced with opportune Interventions of one another, in a continued Series of *God's Providence* in the diſpoſal of

of them, and of such *Idea's* as he thereby sets before our Fansie. 'Tis apparent that he does thereby lead and guide all our Thoughts, Words, and Actions; yet not by any violent Protrusion, but by our own Consent, either by way of Delight, or as to the lesser Evil; and ever by Opinion, whether true or erroneous. So that our Consent not being violated, but led on by our own Choice, we justly become liable to Praise or Blame, and yet are in all our Ways under the Infallible Conduct of God. 4. As our *Body* is a Portion of the *Body* of the *World*, so is our *Spirit*, which guides and acts us, a *Beam* of the *Spirit* of *God*; which also, tho in its own Nature clear, yet is that

Of Predestination and Free will.

that Clearneſs in us more or leſs, according to our Temper whereinto it ſhines: Thus we find our ſelves of different Fancies, when we are Phlegmatick, or when our Blood is Black and Groſs, from what we are when our Blood and Brain is Pure and Thin; and accordingly our Judgment grows more or leſs perſpicacious and rectified; and by conſequence the Inclinations of our Will better or worſe: yet therein no violence is offer'd us. *Spiritus in Nobis non manet in Identitate, ſed recens ingeritur, per renovationem continuam, ſicut flamma, ſed velociore tranſitu, quia res eſt ſpiritualior. Nos enim quotidie facti ſumus ex iis quæ tranſeunt in nos: morimur & renaſcimur quotidie, neque iidem hodie & heri ſumus:*

& perſonam quam tranſeuntem non ſentimus, tandem pertranſiſſe agnoſcimus. Nulla eſt autem rerum tranſitio in nos niſi per viam Alimenti: Omne Alimentum reſpectu Alimentandi eſt conſimile & debilius: Alimentantis corpus ſuccreſcit nobis in corpus; ſpiritus in ſpiritu: non tamen proportio utriuſque fit nobis ad proportionem cibi & potus, aut aeris, niſi a nobis bene ſuperantur; aliter etenim non alunt, ingeſta, ſed opprimunt ſi fortiora ſunt, corrumpunt ſi diſſimilia, idque plus minuſve pro gradu in utroque: Ideoque quo melius res procedat multa fieri oportet: primum prudens electio & moderatio eorum, quæ ingerenda ſunt; & deinceps debita præparatio per artem, ut nobis ſimiliora & debiliora fiant: ex parte noſtri præcipuum eſt exercitium frequens,

quens, ſed modicum, quo calor naturalis vigeat. Again, The Alteration of our Judgment from outward Occurrences is alſo of great importance to preſent us with new *Idea's*, which divert us this way or that way, and ſo into Miſchief or Preſervation, yet always by our own *election*: As for example, A Man going to *London*, perhaps finding the way dirty, leaves it, and takes into a Bie-way, whereby he miſſes *Thieves*, who were then on the *Road*, although he knew not of them; or, perhaps, lights upon another Miſchance in this Way, which he had miſſed in the other: Here is *God's Conduct* of him, either to his *Good* or *Harm*, leading him by that *Idea* of avoiding Dirt, yet without *Compulſion*, and by his *Free Election*:

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Election; wherefore he cannot complain but of himself: Yet *God* did undoubtedly from all Eternity both *foresee* and *decree* this *Election*, with the Event which should follow thereon. For thus *God* doth ever manage us by the Temper of our *Body*, with his inoperating Spirit therein; and by meeting us from without in such Encounters and Occurrences, as will infallibly carry us by our own *Choice* into such things as from all Eternity he had ordained.

5. Some will here object, That if God gives us to *will* or to *refuse*, and that it were not in our own *power* to *will* or to *refuse*, then how could we be praised or punished for ought we *do*, or neglect to *do*? To which I *answer*, Just as well as it befals us for

for having *Fleſh* and *Blood*: Our having *Fleſh* and *Blood* makes us ſubject to much *Pain* and *Pleaſure*; and yet this our *Body* of *Fleſh* and *Blood* was given us of *God*, when we had no power to refuſe it: And if we put our Finger or any Living Creature by force into the *Fire*, it will ſmart and ſuffer as much, as if it had gone in by its own deſire; for the ground of its *ſuffering* is not in the being *willing*, or *unwilling*, but in its *diſagreeableneſs* to *Fire*. And ſo when a Man takes into debauched intemperate Courſes, he falls into Diſeaſes; and whether God or himſelf drive him, that is not the Point; the true Cauſe is, the venomous and oppreſſive Humours which by theſe Courſes he puts into his Body,

Body, destructive to its own Nature. 6. *And lastly*, It was well said of one, who having contrived and put in execution a great and politick Business, and being asked, Whether it was his own Care, or Divine Providence, that had brought this great Work to pass? he replied, *Fuit certe Providentia. Divina, sed quæ per me transiit.* For if we should see a *Sun-beam* in at a Hole enlightning a *dark Room*, 'twould be a very shallow Conception, to suppose that this *Beam* did move or enlighten one way or other, otherwise than as it self was continually enlightned and carried about by its *Original* the *Sun*, from whom it can never be separated, nor have any Vertue apart: And the very same Relation and

and Condition has each particular Man's *Spirit* with the *Spirit* of *God*. *Dei opus ſumus nos parentibus inſtrumentis; actioneſque noſtræ Dei ſunt opera inſtrumentis nobis, ſed per electionem noſtram agentibus: Iſta vero electio per aptas conjuncturas & Ideas adeo immiſſas invitatur & regitur: ideoque nos Creaturæ ſumus momentaneæ æterni Dei apparitiones, quas tantum terris oſtendunt fata, nec ultra eſſe ſinunt: veluti effigies in Auleis.* This Τὸν Θειὸν, or *Divinum aliquid*, is that which actuates all; but our Capacity not being able to diſcern it, makes us faſten either upon *Elementary Qualities*, as *Hippocrates* and *Galen* do; or upon *Geometrical Proportions*, as the Modern *Deſcartes* doth. But notwithſtanding we

are

are thus to ſeek, yet the moſt probable Conjecture of the *Anima Mundi's Operation*, is, That *per Condenſationem & Rarefactionem partes Mundi Corporeæ fiunt Spiritus, & ſpirituales fiunt corpora, ſicque æterne retro aguntur omnia; & cum Microcoſmus a Mundo trahit, vivit Microcoſmus: cum Mundus a Microcoſmo trahit, deficit Microcoſmus.* But now to conclude my Remarques upon this *Fourth Article*, of *Repentance*; give me leave to offer theſe few Conſiderations following, which may perhaps not be impertinent for the directing of us in this difficult Point. *Firſt*, That he that judgeth Man, is his *Father*, and doth look on him as a frail Creature, obnoxious to Sin.

Of Repentance.

Secondly,

Secondly, That he generally finds Men ſin rather out of this Frailty, than out of any deſire to offend his *Divine Majeſty*. *Thirdly*, That if Man had been made inwardly prone to ſin, and yet deſtitute of all inward Means to return to him again, he had been not onely remedileſs in himſelf, but more miſerable than it could be ſuppoſed an *Infinite Goodneſs* did at firſt create, and doth ſtill perpetuate Humane kind. *Fourthly*, That *Man* can do no more on his part, for the ſatisfying of *Divine Juſtice*, than to be *heartily ſorry* and *repent* him of his *Sins*, as well as to endeavour through his Grace to return to the Right way, from which through his Tranſgreſſion he had erred: Or if this did not ſuffice for the making of his

his Peace, that the *Supreme God*, by inflicting ſome Temporal Puniſhment in this Life, might ſatisfie his own *Juſtice*. *Fifthly, and laſtly*, That if Temporal Puniſhment in this Life were too little for the Sin committed, he might yet inflict a greater Puniſhment hereafter in the other Life, however, without giving *eternal Damnation* to thoſe, who (if not for the love of Goodneſs) yet at leaſt upon ſenſe of Puniſhment, would not ſin eternally. Notwithſtanding, ſince theſe things may again be controverted, I ſhall inſiſt only upon this one *univerſally acknowledged Propoſition*, viz. *That Repentance is the onely known and publick Means which on our part is required for ſatisfying the Divine Juſtice, and returning*

returning to the Right way of ſerving God.

Of Reward and Puniſhment after Death.

As to the Fifth and laſt Article, Of a Future Reward or Puniſhment: Tho concerning the Place, Quantity, Quality, Manner, or Duration of Reward or Puniſhment after this Life, there is no univerſal Conſent or Agreement; yet that the *Souls* of Pious, Vertuous, and Good Men enjoy a better State after this Life, and Vicious Wicked Men a worſe, is univerſally acknowledged by all Religions, hardly any of the *Indians* excepted; it being congruous to Reaſon, and the Notions we have of Divine Juſtice, that Good Men

Men (eſpecially thoſe who were afflicted in this Life) ſhould receive their *Reward* hereafter, as well as that Wicked Men (who were happy here) ſhould have in the next World condign Puniſhment. Which I ſay, becauſe there is no other Univerſal Rule, whereby to guide our Belief concerning God's Juſtice hereafter; but that his Puniſhment is proportionable to the Offence: whilſt *Reward* paſſing all Proportion is given to us, not onely according to his acceptation of our pious Endeavours and Actions, but alſo according to the Extent and Latitude of his Infinite Goodneſs and Mercy, in Creating, Redeeming, and Preſerving us.

Now theſe *Five Points* may be matter of great Joy to all Men;

Men; since hereby they may perceive, that the *Universal Providence of God* hath proceeded thus far in giving Means for *Salvation* to *all Mankind*, and therein declared himself *Communis Pater.* Neither can I imagine so much as any one *Article* more in *Common Reason*, that could make Man *better*, or *more pious*, when the aforesaid *Five Articles* were rightly explicated and observed.

Merits and Satisfaction of others.

I did perceive indeed divers Points added hereunto, which gave much ease and relaxation to Mens Minds, while they were taught to trust chiefly to the Merits and Satisfaction of others, for the obtaining of their

Everlaſting Happineſs; ſo that although the *Doctrine* of *Good Works* and *Repentance* were ſeriouſly inculcated into Mens Minds, yet it may be found, that they did not uſually ſo much fix themſelves there, as on the aforeſaid Satisfaction; while they ſaid, all their *Works* were corrupt and abominable, and that (of themſelves) they could not ſo much as think a good Thought; and conſequently pretended to *Heaven* out of an *Implicite Faith* and *Belief* that this Buſineſs was done to their Hands, rather than out of thoſe Works they ſeemed ſo much to diſclaim: Like two *Apprentices*, both of equal Parts, and bound to the ſame Maſter and Trade; when, nevertheleſs, one of them, for want of any other

other Relief, depending wholly upon his Trade, follows it diligently, and grows vaſtly Rich; whereas the other (his Fellow-Prentice) having an Expectation of ſome Paternal Eſtate of Inheritance, does ſo much depend thereon, as makes him not only neglect his *Trade*, but fall into thoſe vicious Courſes, as makes him out-run his Eſtate before he has it: And the contrary is rarely ſeen, tho not impoſſible.

Predeſtination and Election.

Again, I did find in others a *Doctrine* of *Predeſtination* ſo taught, that Men did chiefly truſt to *God's Eternal Election* of them before all *Worlds*: For, as they ſaid, there was a certain *Maſs*, from which *God* (out of

his *good Pleaſure*) *choſe* ſome, and *reprobated* others. And theſe Men I noted to be rather inquiſitive (through the help of their *Teachers*) whether they were of the Number of the *Elect*, than ſtudious to work out their *Salvation* by the good Degrees above related: So that, although their Teachers did indeed exhort them to a *Good Life* and *Repentance*, no leſs than the former, yet as Men derived not the next Cauſes of their *Salvation* from their own *good Endeavours* or *Actions*, ſo much as from the *Secret Counſels of God*; ſo they commonly intermitted much of their proper *Duties*, as believing either they could not fall grievouſly, or at leaſt that ſuch Remedies are provided for them, as they ſhould

ſhould not finally periſh; From whence one may obſerve, that *Vertue* hath ſuffered no ſmall Detriment thereby.

Merit by Good Works.

Notwithſtanding all which, I would not have Men conceive, that they could by their Good Works merit any thing of *God*, (any more than a *Subject* of *England* doth of the King, by his forbearing to commit *Felony* or *Treaſon*) but that I hope Men may aſſure themſelves, that when really they do the beſt they can, it were better to truſt *God's Infinite Mercy* for the *acceptance* of thoſe *Good Works*, joyned with *Faith in* and *Love to God*, than to draw Concluſions of the Certainty of their

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Salvation from thoſe ſecret and hidden *Counſels* of the *Great God*, which no *Power* of *Man* can reach unto.

Remiſſion of Sins.

Moreover, I found others, who, though they did not ſay they could tell who were *Predeſtinated*, but, in ſtead thereof, recommended *Good Works*, as the moſt effectual Means on our Parts for the coming to *God*, did yet otherwiſe teach divers things, which, being not rightly underſtood, derogated not a little from the Severity of *Vertue*: For, (as they ſaid) they had Power to *remit Sins*; and this *Remiſſion* (again) was granted upon no very difficult Terms: Men did not fear to return to

Sin

Sin again, when they found *Pardon* ſo eaſie. Which Abuſe, as alſo ſome of thoſe above-mentioned, I conceive rather to proceed from the *proneneſs* of Men to *Sin*, than from the *Doctrine* of their *Prieſts* and *Teachers*. I could enlarge my ſelf much upon this *Argument*, but that I am unwilling to tranſgreſs my Bounds, eſpecially ſince I believe my ſelf ſufficiently underſtood. Beſides, I find I cannot ſpeak more of theſe ſeveral *Doctrines*, without entring into *Controverſies*, and making uſe of thoſe *Polemical Weapons*, and engaging into ſuch a *Spiritual Warfare*, which as a *Laick* I mean never to trouble my ſelf with. However, I hope I may ſo far expreſs my ſelf, as to wiſh all thoſe *Points* that concern

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Pardon and *Forgiveneſs of Sins*, in any extraordinary way, (on what Side ſoever) may be warily taught, and on ſuch Terms, that upon what *Promiſe* or *Comfortable Doctrine* ſoever preſented to Mankind, nothing may be detracted from that *Vertue* and *Goodneſs* which ought to be the perpetual *Exerciſe* of our *Life*; leſt occaſion be given to make Men more ready and bold to *ſin* again: ſince while Men attend chiefly to thoſe *outward Helps* or *Remedies*, they uſually comply not ſo entirely with their proper *Duties*.

Now theſe *Five Articles* being thus declared, which, if Men did embrace, would alone aſſert a *Catholique Church*; and it being likewiſe demonſtrated how Neceſſary it is for every Man

Man to begin there, before he deſcend to the whole *Context* or *Bulk* of any one *Religion*, which he may find controverted in divers *Ages* and *Countries*; I ſhall now deliver the Reaſons for which I principally embraced them.

Firſt, Becauſe there is no other open and manifeſt Way extant to Mankind, whereby it is poſſible to eſtabliſh *God's Univerſal Providence*, which yet is his *higheſt Attribute*.

Secondly, That I find nothing can be added to them, which will make a Man really more *vertuous* and *good*, than the aforeſaid *Five Articles* or *Points*, when they are ſufficiently inculcated in Mens Hearts.

Thirdly, That however the *Doctrines* added thereto were in-

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deed comfortable and full of Promiſe to thoſe who believe them; yet, ſince I obſerved in general, that Men took occaſion thereby to grow more bold in Sinning, I began to doubt whether they did not derogate from the Severity of *Vertue*: And beſides, I found that thoſe Points were more controverted, than that the Age of any one Man could untie and diſſolve the Intricacies in them.

Fourthly, That I found all *Myſteries*, *Sacraments*, and *Revelations*, tended chiefly to the Eſtabliſhment of theſe *Five Articles*, as being at leaſt the Principal End for the which thoſe *Rites* were ordained.

Fifthly, and laſtly, That I thought the *doing* ſome *good Deed*, *ſpeaking* ſome *good Word*, or

or *thinking* ſome *good Thought*, were more neceſſary Exerciſes of my Life, than that I ſhould omit them for any Conſideration whatſoever.

Having thus therefore ſetled theſe *Five Points*, as *Fundamental*, and together demonſtrated, that we ought to give them the firſt place in our *Religion*; I ſhall come to that *Supplemental* Part, called *Faith*, which Word (as I find among *Authors*) is uſed in two divers Senſes, and thus diſtinguiſhed: *Firſt*, As it is underſtood to be a firm Aſſent given to Things paſt, upon the Credit and Authority of others. And, *ſecondly*, As it is taken for a *Faculty* of the *Soul*, laying hold and fixing it ſelf on *God's Providence* and *Goodneſs* hereafter, if we do the beſt we can. Where

Where we muſt obſerve; That as the *firſt Faith* hath its next or moſt immediate Teſtimoney from Man, and conſequently is true or falſe, as they who firſt affirmed it were: So the *ſecond Faith* is by all *Churches* held neceſſary to be uſed as the beſt means for the uniting of our *Souls* with *God*, when true Piety and a Good Life do concur; inſomuch as I am confident this *latter kind* of *Faith* may be found in good Men, tho no *Tradition* of former times ever come to their Knowledge: Whereas the other *Faith*, depending chiefly on *Revelations*, *Miracles*, and *Prophecies*, hath in it many Difficulties, as I have ſaid before, and is not only controverted among the ſtricter *Proſelytes* of it, but in a manner rejected

rejected by thoſe *Nations* among whom other *Faiths* have been taught by their *Lawgivers*; for all *Faiths* have been ſhaken, but thoſe only which ſtand upon the *Baſis* of *Common Reaſon.*

Notwithſtanding all which, as I thought, it concerned me, among thoſe ſeveral and miraculous *Traditions*, (which were not impoſſible to have been true, if *God* ſo pleaſed,) not to diſtruſt and doubt of all, *Wherefore* I applyed my ſelf chiefly to the *Chriſtian Faith* contained in the *Holy Bible*, as having in it more exact *Precepts* for the Teaching us a *good life* and *repentance*, than any other Book whatſoever that I could meet with: and beſides I found my ſelf (through *Gods Providence*) born in the *Chriſtian Church*, and inſtructed even

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even from my Infancy in the *Holy Doctrines* drawn from thence. But as together I observed many things taught in the said *Church*, which were not only vehemently opposed by other *Christian Churches*, but also repudiated in their chief parts among other *Nations*: So, I found no such solid *Foundation* to build this my *Faith* upon, as the *Authority* in general of the *Christian Church*; resolving according to the saying of a Learned *Father*, *That those things I never had known without the Church, I never had believed without it.* Neither did the Controversies among them much move me, since being a meer *Laick*, I had neither Will nor Leisure to engage my self in the clearing of those doubts; the scruples

ſcruples of thoſe variouſly agitated diſputes by Men equally Learned, being of ſuch intricacy, that I ſaw more and more might be ſaid about them, than that I ſhould preſume to determine any thing by the Judgment of the beſt Authors I could peruſe on either ſide: So that for my *final reſolution*, I thought the beſt *grounds* of my *Faith* ought to be taken from thoſe points which were piouſly aſſented to by all *Chriſtians*, and might aptly conſiſt with my aforementioned *Five Articles*; But for the *diſputes* and *controverſies* of Learned Men, to lay them aſide, until they were agreed amongſt themſelves; and in the mean while to attend a *good life*, and *repentance*, aſſuring my ſelf, that in

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in the quality of a *Laick* or *Secular Perſon*, my time was better imployed ſo, than in the inexplicable *ſubtleties* of the *Schoolmen*. To conclude, I embraced the *five Catholick Articles* for the Reaſons above mentioned; from whence coming to the *Doctrines* of *Faith*, I believed piouſly, upon the *reverend Authority* of the *Church*, that which was unanimouſly taught by them, without any contradictions: All which I have here ſet down, with no intention to ſcandalize any, but only to give a Reaſon as well of thoſe *Points* which may be known, as of thoſe which are already believed in the *Chriſtian Religion*: And alſo to induce men by theſe *Principles* to the *Practice* of a *good life*, and bleſſed concord among them-

themſelves; ſince having jointly received theſe *five Catholick Points*, there will be leſs occaſion of hate and diſſention about the reſt: So that the *different Opinions* amongſt them might be argued with leſs *violence* and *paſſion*, the *Points* wherein they are agreed being greater *bonds* of *Love* and *Amity* among them, than that they ſhould be diſſolved on any leſſer occaſion. And *certainly*, unleſs the *Method* I have here propoſed be effectual to this purpoſe, I ſee no hope that any good Reconciliation can follow among the *Principal Sects* of the *Chriſtian Religion*; ſince the one *affirming* the *Scripture* to be the *ſole Judge* of *Controverſies*, and the other ſaying that the *Church* alone ſhould determine them, they ſeem like perſons

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persons in variance, who disagreeing about their *Arbitrators* or *Judges*, are hopeless that the business in Question between them should ever come to a *just Tryal*, and find an indifferent or equal Decision. Now upon all that hath been said, give me leave to raise these few *Queries*, and so conclude.

Queries proving the validity of the five Articles.

1. *Whether* there be any *True God*, but he that useth *Universal Providence* concerning the *means* of coming to him?

2. *Whether* these *means* appear universally otherwise, than in our aforesaid *five Catholick Articles?*

3. *Whether* any thing can be added

added to these *Five Principles*, that may tend to make a Man more *honest*, *vertuous*, or a *better Man*?

4. *Whether* any things that are added to these *Five Principles* from the *Doctrine* of *Faith*, be not *uncertain* in their *Original*?

5. Supposing the *Originals* true, *Whether* yet they be not *uncertain* in their *Explications*, so that unless a Man read all *Authors*, speak with all *Learned Men*, and know all *Languages*, it be not impossible to come to a clear *Solution* of *all Doubts*?

6. Supposing all *true* in their *Originals*, and in their *Explications*, *Whether* yet they be so good for the instructing of Mankind, that bring *Pardon* of *Sin* upon such easie Terms, as to believe

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lieve the Buſineſs is done to our Hands? And,

7. *Whether* this *Doctrine* doth not derogate from *Vertue* and *Goodneſs*, whilſt our beſt Actions are repreſented as Imperfect and Sinful, and that it is impoſſible to keep the *Ten Commandments*, ſo as *God* will accept our *Actions*, doing the beſt we can?

8. *Whether* ſpeaking *good Words*, thinking *good Thoughts*, and doing *good Actions*, be not the juſt Exerciſe of a Mans Life? Or that without embracing of the foreſaid *Five Principles* or *Fundamentals*, it be poſſible to keep *Peace* among Men, that *God* may be well ſerved?

9. *Whether* the foreſaid *Five Principles* do not beſt agree with the *Precepts* given in the *Ten Commandments*, and with the *Two*

Precepts

Precepts of *Jeſus Chriſt*, viz. *To love God above all, and our Neighbour as our ſelves*? As well as with the Words of *St. Peter*, *That in every Nation he which feareth God, and worketh Righteouſneſs, is accepted of God*?

10. *Whether* the *Doctrine* of *Faith* can by *Humane Reaſon* be ſuppoſed or granted to be *Infallible*, unleſs we are infallibly aſſured, that thoſe who teach this *Doctrine* do know the *Secret Counſels* of *God*?

11. *Whether* all things in the *Scriptures*, (beſides the *Moral Part*, which agrees with our *Five Principles*) ſuch as *Prophecy*, *Miracles*, and *Revelations* depending on the *Hiſtory*, may not be ſo far examined, as to be made appear by what *Authority* they are or may be received?

12. *Whether*

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12. *Whether* in *Humane Reason* any one may or ought to be convinced by *one single Testimony*, so far as to believe things contrary to, or besides *Reason*?

13. *And lastly, Whether*, if it were granted they had *Revelations*, I am obliged to accept of anothers *Revelation* for the *Ground* of my *Faith*? Especially if it doth any ways oppose these *Five Articles*, that are grounded upon the *Law* of *Nature*, which is *God's universal Magna Charta*, Enacted by the *All-wise* and *Supreme Being* from the *beginning* of the *World*, and therefore not to be destroyed or altered by every *whiffling Proclamation* of an *Enthusiast*.

The Law of Nature unalterable.

Finally, Submitting this Discourse to my Impartial and Judicious

dicious *Reader*, I ſhall conclude with the *Saying* of *Juſtin Martyr*, p. 83. Καὶ οἱ μεϛὰ λόγυ, &c. *That all thoſe who lived according to the Rule of Reaſon, were Chriſtians, notwithſtanding that they might have been accounted as Atheiſts: ſuch as, among the* Greeks, *were* Socrates, Heraclitus, *and the like; and among the* Barbarians, Abraham *and* Azarias: *For all thoſe who lived, or do now live, according to the Rule of Reaſon, are Chriſtians, and in an aſſured quiet condition.* Apol. cont. Tryph.

FINIS.

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